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Motivation of Learners and Parents in Attending the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning (ARAL) Program in San Mateo, Rizal: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: This qualitative study examines the motivation of learners and parents in participating in the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program in San Mateo, Rizal, and identifies the factors that sustain or hinder engagement. Drawing on a community consultation with 32 parents, the study examines how the recognition of the program's value, tangible academic progress, and family support interact with external barriers, including poverty, hunger, chronic health conditions, and digital distractions. The findings reveal that 21 out of 32 parents demonstrated a clear understanding of the program's goals; however, participation was frequently limited by economic constraints, absenteeism linked to asthma and allergies, and learners' excessive use of mobile devices and gadgets. Three primary motivational factors emerged: parental encouragement and active home support, observable improvement in reading skills and lesson comprehension, and the resulting growth in learner confidence that encouraged continued participation across other subjects. The study concludes that parental involvement is the central driver of the program's sustainability and that holistic interventions, such as supplementary feeding, more interactive classroom activities, and stronger home-school collaboration, are necessary to address engagement barriers. The resulting ARAL Program Sustainability Framework is built upon four pillars: pedagogical innovation, socio-economic and nutritional support, home-school collaboration, and strategic monitoring. By integrating academic instruction with nutritional, psychosocial, and family-based interventions, the program offers a replicable model for community-led academic recovery initiatives that seek to address literacy gaps among underserved learners.

IndexTerms - ARAL Program, motivational factors, parental involvement, and Program Sustainability Framework

I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an unprecedented global disruption that changed the way education works all over the world. This led to huge learning gaps, especially in basic skills among students. This was especially bad in the Philippines, where long school closures made existing gaps worse, leaving many students several grade levels behind in basic subjects like reading and math. In response to this serious problem, the Philippines' Department of Education started the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program. This is a broad effort to fix these learning gaps and help students get back on track with their education. (Bacorro et.al, 2026). This program, which is often called ARAL, aims to improve and combine learning skills through a variety of intervention strategies. (David et al.,2024). The ARAL Program is an important intervention, but it won't work or last long if both students and their parents aren't motivated to keep it going.

Motivation for learners can be described as an integration between reestablishing disrupted routines and striving for constant aspirations (Bacorro et al., 2026; Bordeos et al., 2022). The ARAL program is not only meant to help students catch up, but also to help them get back into the habit of learning and regain their confidence, which they lost during the time of modular and remote learning (Bacorro et al., 2026). Parents are increasingly interested in the ARAL program because they understand how important public education is (Bordeos et al., 2022). They see participation in ARAL as a way to make sure that pandemic-related setbacks do not stop their passion for learning. The distributed leadership model, in which parents share responsibility and power with school heads and tutors, is what makes ARAL work (Santos et al., 2025). This shared ownership encourages parents to actively support the program as a community-driven initiative rather than merely a school-based intervention. Parents from underprivileged or resource-limited communities are driven by the program's function as a social equalizer, offering their children the chance to learn, recuperate, and flourish irrespective of their socioeconomic background (Bacorro et al., 2026).

Comprehending these motivational factors is essential, as intrinsic and extrinsic drivers profoundly affect engagement, perseverance, and ultimately, the effectiveness of academic recovery initiatives. This qualitative study aims to investigate the particular motivational factors that compel learners and their parents in San Mateo, Rizal, to engage actively in the ARAL Program. (Bordeos et al, 2022). The research conducted by Castillo (2025) emphasizes the essential importance of the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning Program as a crucial measure for mitigating literacy and numeracy deficiencies in the Philippines. One of the most important findings of the study was that students often struggle to understand what they read because they cannot quickly and

accurately decode text. When students use too much mental energy to figure out what each word means, they cannot understand or make sense of things as well. Castillo (2025) states that the research did not find a strong link between standardized reading tests and overall academic success. This means that traditional classroom grades might not be a good way to tell how well a student can read. To address these gaps, Castillo's (2025) study advocates for the structured interventions proposed under the ARAL Program, including repeated readings, goal setting, and corrective feedback, by identifying the necessity to investigate the mediating roles of reading motivation and socio-emotional factors in academic recovery. This underscores a specific research gap that this qualitative study on the motivational factors of learners and parents in San Mateo, Rizal, is ideally suited to address.

The researcher seeks to expound the complex motivations that can guide specific strategies to improve program engagement and maximize learning outcomes for students in San Mateo, Rizal.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the motivational factors of learners in attending the ARAL Program?
2. How can the learners be engaged in ARAL program?
3. Based on the result, what are the recommendations to motivate the learners in participating the ARAL program?

II. RESEARCH METHODOLLOGY

The researcher will employ a qualitative research design to investigate the diverse motivational factors affecting participation in the ARAL program in San Mateo, Rizal. This study will use interviews and focus groups to get information from both students and parents about what drives them and how they feel about their experiences. The selection of participants will be intentional, guaranteeing representation from diverse demographic backgrounds to encompass a broad range of perspectives on the program's impact and appeal. The examination of this qualitative data will employ thematic analysis, facilitating the recognition of persistent patterns and providing profound insights into the underlying motivational dynamics. The use of qualitative methods, based on the best ways to collect and analyze data, will make sure that the results are reliable and trustworthy for making policy recommendations.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings identify three primary motivational factors for learners and parents participating in the ARAL program: strong parental encouragement, visible improvement in academic skills, and a deep-seated recognition of the importance of education for the future. Learners are heavily influenced by parents who provide both academic support such as reviewing lessons and providing extra worksheets, and physical care, including preparing meals and managing health issues to prevent absenteeism. Parents often use their own personal struggles in labor-intensive jobs to inspire their children toward better life outcomes. Tangible progress in reading and comprehension is a significant driver, as it builds learner confidence and encourages continued participation.

To maintain high engagement levels, the results suggest incorporating more interactive and "fun" activities to prevent boredom, ensuring one-on-one teacher assistance with high levels of patience, and implementing feeding programs to address hunger as a barrier to learning. Ultimately, the program is successful in improving both literacy and student confidence through a collaborative relationship between the home and the learning center.

Category	**Key Themes / Factors**	**Descriptive Evidence & Frequency**
Motivational Factors	**Parental Encouragement & Support**	Parents actively advise children to read and help with home reviews/worksheets. Most children attend voluntarily (7 parents), while others are encouraged through explanations of long-term benefits (5 parents)
	Visible Skill Improvement	Parents reported seeing tangible progress in their children's reading fluency and comprehension, which reinforces their commitment to the program.
	Aspiration for the Future	Motivation is driven by the belief that education is the primary tool to escape poverty. One parent noted: *"Mag-aral kayo ng mabuti... matutulad kayo sa amin na mahirap ang buhay"*.
Barriers to Attendance	**Socio-Economic Constraints**	Financial issues are the leading barrier, specifically the lack of allowance for transportation and meals (7 parents).
	Health and Well-being	Chronic health issues such as asthma and allergies frequently cause absenteeism (3 parents). Hunger was also cited as a major deterrent.

	Digital Distractions	A lack of interest in lessons is often attributed to excessive use of gadgets and mobile devices.
Program Impact	**Psychosocial Benefits**	Beyond academic skills, parents observed an increase in their children's confidence when reading and applying lessons to other subjects.

The results indicate that while there is a high level of parental recognition regarding the program's value (with 21 out of 32 parents having a clear understanding of ARAL's goals), participation is often hindered by external economic factors. Parents specifically suggested the integration of a **feeding program** to improve attendance, noting that it is difficult for children to focus on learning when they are hungry.

Primary Motivational Factors

According to the findings in the community consultation conducted in San Mateo, the top three motivational factors for learners include:

1. **Parental Encouragement and Support:** Learners are heavily motivated by their parents, who actively advise them to study and read. This support includes helping with lesson reviews, providing extra worksheets, and even practical care like preparing meals before sessions
2. **Visible Improvement in Skills:** Both learners and parents are motivated by the tangible progress observed during the program. Seeing a "visible improvement" in reading skills and a better understanding of lessons encourages continued participation. This progress often leads to a significant gain in learner confidence
3. **Recognition of the Importance of Education:** Parents motivate their children by explaining that education is the key to a better future. In some cases, parents use their own life struggles (e.g., working as helpers or construction workers) as a narrative to inspire their children to study harder and avoid similar hardships

Factors for Improving Engagement

To further boost learner motivation, the documents suggest addressing physical needs and engagement strategies:

- **Provision of Food:** Parents suggested that implementing a feeding program would encourage regular attendance, as children find it difficult to focus when hungry.
- **Interactive Activities:** Adding more "fun and interesting activities" during sessions was recommended to maintain high levels of learner interest.

Based on the results and community consultation data regarding the ARAL program in San Mateo, Rizal, learners can be engaged through a combination of pedagogical adjustments, physical support, and environmental management.

Pedagogical Strategies for Engagement

To maintain high levels of learner interest and participation, the document suggests the following instructional improvements:

- **Incorporating Interactive Activities:** Parents and stakeholders recommend adding more "fun and interesting activities" during the sessions to prevent boredom and sustain the children's focus.
- **Individualized Instruction:** Engagement is improved when teachers provide one-on-one support, helping children individually based on their specific reading difficulties.
- **Teacher Patience and Empathy:** The results highlight the need for teachers to show significant patience and understanding, particularly for learners who struggle with foundational literacy, to prevent them from becoming discouraged.

Physical and Resource Support

The findings indicate that engagement is often hindered by external physical factors, which can be addressed through:

- **Implementation of a Feeding Program:** A primary suggestion from the community is to provide meals before sessions. It was noted that "it is hard for a child to learn when he or she is hungry". Ensuring children are well-fed allows them to focus better on the lessons rather than their physical discomfort.
- **Addressing Financial and Health Barriers:** Reducing absenteeism by addressing financial constraints (such as transportation costs) and monitoring health issues like asthma ensures that learners remain consistently engaged in the program's progression.

Managing Distractions and Environment

The research identifies specific environmental challenges that must be managed to keep learners engaged:

- **Regulating Gadget Use:** One of the top problems identified was a lack of interest due to "excessive use of devices". Engagement strategies must include ways to pivot the learner's attention from digital distractions back to academic activities.
- **Consistent Attendance:** Because reading skill development depends on "frequent and consistent participation," engagement is inextricably linked to regular attendance.

The Role of Parental Reinforcement

Learner engagement is significantly bolstered when the learning continues outside the classroom. Parents can engage their children by:

- Encouraging reading at home and helping with lesson reviews.
- Providing a supportive home environment, such as preparing meals before sessions and offering extra worksheets for practice.

DISCUSSION

The study centers on the multifaceted nature of motivation and engagement within the Academic Recovery and Accessible Learning program, emphasizing that success is predicated on a synergistic relationship between the home and the learning center. A primary thematic finding is that motivation is deeply rooted in both tangible academic progress and long-term socioeconomic aspirations; parents often utilize their personal narratives of manual labor and hardship to inspire their children toward academic excellence as a pathway to a better future. This extrinsic motivation is complemented by the "visible improvement" in reading and comprehension skills, which serves as a critical internal driver by significantly boosting learner confidence.

Furthermore, the discussion highlights that pedagogical effectiveness alone is insufficient without addressing holistic barriers to learning. Engagement is contingent upon the implementation of interactive and "fun" activities to mitigate boredom and compete with digital distractions, such as excessive gadget use. The role of the educator is characterized not only by instructional delivery but by a high degree of patience and the provision of individualized, one-on-one support, which prevents struggling learners from becoming discouraged. Crucially, the study identifies physical well-being, specifically nutrition, as a prerequisite for cognitive engagement, arguing that a feeding program is essential because hunger remains a significant barrier to focus. Ultimately, the sustainability of such academic recovery initiatives depends on parents providing continuous academic, logistical, and health-related support at home to ensure frequent and consistent participation.

1. Motivational Factors

The motivation for learners and parents to participate in the program is rooted in tangible progress and long-term aspirations:

- **Parental Encouragement:** Parents consistently motivate their children by advising them to read and study, often using their own personal struggles (e.g., working as helpers or construction workers) to inspire their children toward a better future.
- **Observed Progress:** Both parents and learners are driven by the "visible improvement" in the children's reading skills and their increased ability to understand lessons.
- **Learner Confidence:** As learners see their own growth, their confidence increases, which serves as a significant internal motivator.

2. Learning Engagement

The study identifies specific pedagogical and physical strategies required to keep learners engaged:

- **Interactive and "Fun" Activities:** There is a strong recommendation from participants to include more interesting and engaging activities to prevent boredom and maintain focus during sessions.
- **Teacher Interaction:** One-on-one assistance and the patience of the teachers are critical factors that keep learners engaged, especially those struggling with foundational skills.
- **Nutritional Support:** The results emphasize that hunger is a major barrier to engagement; implementing a feeding program is suggested because it is "hard for a child to learn when he or she is hungry".
- **Managing Distractions:** Addressing the "excessive use of devices" and gadgets is necessary to refocus the learners' attention on their academic tasks.

3. Involvement of Parents and Learners

The study underscores that the success of the ARAL program depends on a collaborative relationship between the home and the learning center:

- **Academic Support at Home:** Parents are actively involved by reviewing lessons with their children, providing extra worksheets, and encouraging reading outside of the scheduled program hours.
- **Physical and Health Management:** Parents ensure learner readiness by preparing meals before sessions and managing health issues, such as asthma, which could otherwise lead to absenteeism.
- **Overcoming Barriers:** Parents play a vital role in addressing financial constraints and transportation issues to ensure "frequent and consistent participation," which the study identifies as essential for skill development.
- **Learner Commitment:** Learners contribute by following parental guidance and committing to regular attendance despite external distractions.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Program Successfully Improves Literacy and Confidence

The ARAL program is concluded to be an effective initiative for addressing learning gaps. Most parents observed a "visible change" in their children's ability to read, understand, and apply lessons. Beyond academic skills, the program significantly boosts learner confidence, which encourages children to engage more deeply with their studies.

2. Parental Involvement is the Primary Driver of Sustainability

A critical conclusion is that the success of the program is "heavily reliant" on the active support of parents. This involvement is multifaceted, including:

- Academic Support: Reviewing lessons and providing extra worksheets at home.
- Emotional Motivation: Using future aspirations and personal family struggles (e.g., parents' manual labor) to inspire children to prioritize education.
- Logistical Support: Ensuring children are prepared with meals and attending sessions regularly.

3. Holistic Support is Required to Overcome Engagement Barriers

The study concludes that teaching alone is insufficient for long-term success; physical and environmental barriers must be addressed to maintain attendance. Specifically, the document highlights that nutrition is a prerequisite for learning, suggesting that a feeding program is essential because "it is hard for a child to learn when he or she is hungry". Additionally, the program must evolve to include more "fun and interactive activities" to compete with digital distractions like gadget use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, the primary recommendation for ensuring the long-term effectiveness and engagement of the initiative is encapsulated in the ARAL Program Sustainability Framework. This comprehensive framework is built upon four critical pillars: pedagogical innovation, socio-economic support, home-school collaboration, and strategic monitoring.

At the instructional level, the framework advocates for "Pedagogical and Instructional Innovations" that prioritize active learning by integrating interactive and engaging activities into the curriculum to prevent learner boredom. It emphasizes the necessity of individualized literacy support through one-on-one teacher assistance, which is essential for students struggling with foundational reading skills, and calls for "Teacher Empathy Training" to ensure educators maintain the high levels of patience required for a safe learning environment. Recognizing that cognitive engagement is dependent on physical well-being, the framework strongly recommends "Socio-Economic and Nutritional Interventions," most notably a feeding program to address hunger as a barrier to learning, alongside logistical support to mitigate financial and health-related obstacles to attendance.

Furthermore, the framework highlights the importance of "Home-School Collaborative Support," suggesting that parents be empowered through coaching to provide lesson reviews at home and manage "Digital Wellness" by regulating excessive gadget use. A unique recommendation within this pillar is the use of "Narrative-Based Motivation," where family stories of perseverance and the value of education are used as tools to inspire learner commitment. Finally, the framework includes "Strategic Program Monitoring," which involves implementing tracking systems to ensure consistent participation and conducting regular stakeholder consultations to keep the program responsive to the specific needs of the San Mateo community.

The recommendations for the ARAL program in San Mateo can be organized into a Holistic Support and Engagement Framework. This framework addresses the academic, physical, and environmental needs identified during the community consultation.

The ARAL Program Sustainability Framework

I. Pedagogical & Instructional Innovations

To maintain learner interest and address the diverse needs of students, the study recommends:

- Active Learning Integration: Incorporate "fun and interesting activities" into the curriculum to prevent boredom and sustain focus throughout the sessions.
- Individualized Literacy Support: Ensure teachers provide dedicated one-on-one assistance, as individualized attention is critical for children struggling with foundational reading skills.
- Teacher Empathy Training: Maintain a high level of patience and understanding among educators to foster a safe and encouraging environment for learners who are lagging behind.

II. Socio-Economic & Nutritional Interventions

Recognizing that physical needs are a prerequisite for cognitive performance, the study suggests:

- Implementation of a Feeding Program: The most prominent recommendation is to provide meals or snacks, as the data shows "it is hard for a child to learn when he or she is hungry".
- Logistical Support: Address financial and health-related barriers to attendance, such as providing transportation assistance or monitoring learners with chronic conditions like asthma.

III. Home-School Collaborative Support

To ensure the sustainability of learning gains beyond the classroom, the framework emphasizes:

- Strengthened Parental Coaching: Encourage parents to continue being the primary motivators by advising their children to read and helping with lesson reviews at home.
- Digital Wellness Management: Collaborate with parents to regulate "excessive use of devices" and gadgets, which was identified as a major distraction for learners.
- Narrative-Based Motivation: Utilize family stories of perseverance and the value of education (e.g., parents' manual labor struggles) as a tool to inspire learners to commit to their studies for a better future.

IV. Strategic Program Monitoring

- Consistency in Participation: Implement tracking systems to ensure "frequent and consistent participation," which is essential for the cumulative development of reading and comprehension skills.
- Stakeholder Consultation: Continue the practice of regular community consultations to ensure the program remains responsive to the specific needs of the San Mateo locality.

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